

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7357

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PDEV, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: REES GAMBLE FAILS AS IRA CEASE FIRE ENDS

REF: (A) LONDON 578; (B) DUBLIN 103

1. NI SECRETARY REES' HOPES TO BRING DURABLE PEACE TO ULSTER (REF A) APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN DASHED BY THE PROVISIONAL IRA'S JANUARY 16 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT IT WILL RESUME OPERATIONS AGAINST THE BRITISH (REF B). REES REPORTEDLY REACTED WITH "OUTRAGE AND DISAPPOINTMENT," CHARGING THAT THE IRAP'S ACTION SHOWED A 'TOTAL LACK OF CONCERN FOR THE PEOPLE'S CLEAR CALL FOR AN END TO VIOLENCE.' HE AFFIRMED, HOWEVER, THAT HMG WOULD NOT MAKE ANY NEW CONCESSIONS TO RESTORE THE TRUCE. PRESS REPORTS PARLIAMENTARY REACTION TO NEWS WAS ONE OF DISAPPOINTMENT, BUT THAT BOTH LABOR PARTY AND OPPOSITION CONTINUE TO SUPPORT REES AND HMG'S NI POLICY.

2. COMMENT: THE IRAP DECISION WAS A BITTER BLOW TO THE GOVERNMENT AND TO REES, WHOSE HIGH RISK GAMBLE TO OBTAIN PERMANENT CESSATION OF VIOLENCE FAILED TO PAY OFF. WE UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT NI OFFICE, THROUGH ITS CHANN-
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ELS OF COMMUNICATION WITH IRAP, IS SEEKING TO OBTAIN

RECONSIDERATION OF THIS DECISION. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO SEE WHAT HMG CAN OFFER THE IRAP AS AN INCENTIVE TO SALVAGE THE TRUCE, GIVEN REES' STATEMENT AND THE DANGER THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT CONCESSION COULD TRIGGER REACTION FROM MILITANT PROTESTANTS.

3. HMG'S STRATEGY THROUGHOUT CEASE FIRE PERIOD WAS DESIGNED TO ENSURE ONUS FOR RESUMPTION OF VIOLENCE WOULD BE ON IRAP. RESUMPTION OF CEASE FIRE WILL TEST EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS EFFORTS TO DIMINISH SUPPORT FOR IRAP IN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY, THEREBY WEAKENING THAT ORGANIZATION'S SUPPORT APPARATUS AND FACILITATING FUTURE SECURITY OPERATIONS AGAINST IT. FACT THAT MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE IRAP WILL NOW FOCUS ITS PRIMARY EFFORT ON TARGETS IN BRITAIN, WHERE ITS SUPPORT APPARATUS HAS BEEN WEAKEST AND THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT HOSTILE, MAY INDICATE THAT IRAP PERCEIVES THAT SENTIMENT IN NI CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IS MARKEDLY LESS FAVORABLE THAN PREVIOUSLY.

SPIERS

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